



**The Arts and the Quality of Life**  
The attitudes of Ontarians

Executive Summary

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## Introduction

This Report is based on the results of an omnibus survey conducted by Environics Research Group on behalf of The Ontario Arts Council. The survey was designed to update research undertaken in 1994 to explore the attitudes of Ontarians toward arts and the quality of life.

The survey was conducted by telephone between February 22 and 28 & March 4 and 10, 2010. It examines the opinions of a probability sample of 1,000 adult residents of Ontario (aged 18 or older). The sample, which was stratified by gender, region and by community size, is estimated to be accurate within approximately 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The survey looked at the following topics:

- Public concepts of the arts
- Importance of the arts to one's own quality of life
- Value of art to community quality of life
- Relative importance of the arts compared to other aspects of the community
- Who benefits more from the arts?
- Benefits from attending/participating in arts activities
- Success of Canadian artists leads to pride in Canadian achievement
- Government spending on the arts
- Participation in the arts as a child and as an adult

Wherever possible, results of the current survey are compared to those from the survey conducted in 1994.

## Executive summary

The objective of this research was to get a better understanding of Ontarians' views on the arts and quality of life.

The findings indicate that Ontarians believe that the presence of the arts is important to their own quality of life. A large majority of Ontarians think the arts are important to their own quality of life, and the view that the arts are "very important" has grown since 1994. A large majority also say they would miss the arts if they were not available in their community, and the proportion who say they would miss the arts "very much" has grown from 1994.

Ontarians also believe that the presence of the arts is important to their community. An overwhelming majority believe that arts activities help enrich the quality of our lives, and strong agreement with this statement has increased from 1994. An overwhelming majority also believe that arts facilities are important to their community's quality of life, and the proportion who say this is "very important" grew slightly since 1994. A vast majority believe that their community would lose something of value if it were to lose its arts activities. A large majority disagree with the view that arts activities do little or nothing for the well-being of their community.

Other data from the survey also indicate that Ontarians believe that the benefits of the arts extend to the community as a whole. A large majority of Ontarians believe that the presence of arts in a community is more beneficial to the community as a whole, rather than just those who attend arts activities.

When it comes to the perceived benefits of actually attending or participating in the arts, the survey finds that entertainment or fun was seen as the chief benefit. However, sizeable proportions (more than one in ten responses) mention learning or experiencing something new, emotional, spiritual or intellectual stimulation, and exposure to different cultures.

The survey also finds that Ontarians support government spending on the arts. A large majority of Ontarians agree that government should spend public dollars to support the arts, including four in ten who strongly support this view.

When it comes to participating in the arts, there is a fairly high participation in the arts as a child and as an adult. Large majorities report at least occasionally participating in the arts when they were growing up and in the last couple of years.

Looking at regional and demographic results, the data indicate that majorities of Ontarians across all regional and demographic groups believe the arts are important to individual and community quality of life, that the arts enrich our lives, and support government spending of public dollars to support the arts. However, strongly held beliefs on these issues are mainly driven by community size, gender and education. Those living in the larger communities (more than 100,000 inhabitants), women and those with higher education are more inclined to think the arts are very important to their own quality of life and to the quality of life of their community, to strongly believe that the arts enrich our lives, to strongly disagree with the view that arts activities do little or nothing for the well-being of their community, and to strongly believe that government should spend public dollars to support the arts.

Participation in the arts as a child or an adult is also a strong indicator of strongly held perceptions on arts and the quality of life. Those who often participated in the arts are more likely to think the arts are very important to their own quality of life and to the quality of life of their community, to strongly believe that the arts enrich our lives, to strongly agree that their community would lose something of value if it were to lose its arts activities, to strongly disagree with the view that arts activities do little or nothing for the well-being of their community, and to strongly believe that government should spend public dollars to support the arts.

When it comes to language, large majorities of both Anglophones and Francophones hold positive attitudes about the arts, with no consistent patterns in the responses across the survey questions for either of these linguistic groups. However, there are differences between these groups in a few questions. For example, Anglophones are twice as likely as Francophones to say they would miss the arts very much if they were not available in their community. Francophones are more likely than Anglophones to strongly agree that if their community lost its arts activities, people living there would lose something of value.

Below is a summary of the main findings of the research.

- *Ontarians are most likely to mention the performing arts, including music and theatre, as activities that comprise “the arts.”*
- *Eight in ten Ontarians think the arts are important to their own quality of life, including more than four in ten who think they are very important. Moreover, the salience of the arts is up from 1994.*
- *Three-quarters of Ontarians would miss the arts if they were not available in their community, including one-third who would miss them very much. Moreover, the proportion who would miss them very much is up from 1994.*
- *More than nine in ten Ontarians believe arts activities help enrich the quality of our lives, including two-thirds who express strong agreement with this view. Moreover, strong agreement is up from 1994.*
- *Nine in ten Ontarians agree that if their community lost its arts activities, people living there would lose something of value, including almost six in ten who express strong agreement with this view. Moreover, strong agreement is up slightly from 1994.*
- *Three-quarters of Ontarians disagree that arts activities do little or nothing for the well-being of a community, including almost six in ten who express strong disagreement with this view.*
- *Nine in ten Ontarians think it is important for their community’s quality of life to have arts facilities, including half who say this is very important. Moreover, the number who believe this is very important is up slightly from 1994.*

- *Compared to other specific aspects of community life, including parks and green spaces, sports and recreational facilities, and public transit, arts facilities are less likely to be considered as very important to the quality of life in a community. However, Ontarians who have the most positive attitudes towards the arts across a range of survey questions (as well as those who are frequent arts participants) are also more likely to rate the importance of these other aspects of community life most highly.*
- *Two-thirds of Ontarians believe the presence of the arts in their community is more beneficial to the community as a whole; one-third think that the arts are more beneficial to those who attend arts activities.*
- *Entertainment or fun is the most mentioned benefit of attending arts activities or participating in the arts, followed by experiencing something new, emotional/spiritual/intellectual stimulation and exposure to different cultures.*
- *More than nine in ten Ontarians believe that the success of Canadian artists like singers, writers, actors and painters, gives people a sense of pride in Canadian achievement, including two-thirds who express strong agreement. However, the proportion who strongly agree with this view is down slightly from 1994.*
- *Eight in ten Ontarians believe the government should spend public dollars to support the arts, including four in ten who express strong agreement with this view.*
- *Two-thirds of Ontarians report having participated in the arts as a child.*
- *Seven in ten Ontarians report having participated in the arts as an adult.*